BIG SISTER

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Big Sister

Why on earth do so many masculinist authors support evolutionism and, in some cases, draw on evolutionary psychology?

Evolutionary psychology is a branch of cognitive psychology that interprets mental structures and human behaviour as the product of biological adaptations throughout evolution. It posits that the human brain functions as an organ shaped by adaptive pressure, just like physiological systems, and that it contains specialised cognitive mechanisms developed to respond to the challenges encountered in prehistoric environments.

Three classic examples of adaptations proposed by evolutionary psychology are a preference for high-calorie foods, fear of snakes and fear of heights.

In the Pleistocene environment, food sources were uncertain and scarce. In this context, individuals who showed a particular attraction to foods rich in fats and sugars had a decisive advantage: they could build up bodily reserves and better withstand frequent famines.

Evolutionary psychology thus interprets the preference for high-calorie foods as an adaptation: our brain is thought to have developed a reward system particularly sensitive to these nutrients, resulting in an increased release of dopamine when they are consumed. This mechanism, perfectly suited to an environment where fatty and sugary foods were scarce, becomes problematic in contemporary societies, where they are constantly available. This adaptation leads to obesity and diabetes, as our brain still 'thinks' that the next famine is just around the corner.

This theory is based on the idea that our ancestors lived in constant fear of starvation. However, anthropological data on hunter-gatherers (past and present) often reveal a different reality. In many environments, resources were diverse and abundant. Ethnographic studies, notably those conducted by Marshall Sahlins (Stone Age Economics: The Economy of Primitive Societies, Gallimard, 'Bibliothèque des sciences humaines' series, 1976 [Stone Age Economics, 1972]) have shown that, to ensure the group's total caloric survival, adults worked on average only 15 to 20 hours a week: it was the invention of agriculture (the Neolithic Revolution) that forced humans to work hard. Agriculture made it possible to feed more people in less space, but at the cost of a dramatic increase in working hours and a decline in nutritional quality. If food was not as scarce in the Pleistocene as our evolutionary psychologists claim, the obsession with sugar is no longer a 'vital adaptation', but merely a natural inclination towards what tastes good, without natural selection needing to intervene with such insistence. Be that as it may, nature is not only far-sighted, it is also bitterly ironic: it saved us from Pleistocene famine only to finish us off at the all-you-can-eat buffet.

Let us now turn to the Snake Detection Theory, proposed by the anthropologist Lynne Isbell. The need to spot motionless snakes, camouflaged in the foliage, enabled the visual system of primates to perceive contrasts and colours more effectively, as well as to develop better stereoscopic vision.

In fact, what this researcher discovered, without realising it, is that snakes are creatures of a thoroughly Buddhist compassion and saintly patience. Indeed, seeing that primates had poor eyesight, the snakes kindly gave them all the time they needed—that is to say, 'millions of years'—to develop a visual system capable of spotting them.

If the pressure on the primates had been too great (the snake killing everyone), the species would have gone extinct. If it had been too weak (one can survive with poor eyesight), there would have been no evolution. In short, the snake must be just dangerous enough to eliminate the primates with the poorest eyesight, but not dangerous enough to prevent the species from surviving.

If Dr Pangloss had taken a greater interest in snakes than in noses, he would have said: 'Snakes were made so that primates might have eagle-like vision.' Yes, of course, one might reply that, all things considered, as natural selection had taken an interest in their development, some primates had slightly better eyesight than others and were therefore, on average, slightly more likely to survive and reproduce, producing offspring similar to themselves — and so on, until primates developed a visual system powerful enough to spot snakes in their vicinity.

As for the evolutionary psychology theory on the fear of heights, it is so dizzying that we shall move straight on to examining the evolutionary argument put forward by the masculinist author, an extract from whose writings we present below; an argument according to which women 'became manipulative to compensate for men's greater physical strength and aggression'. The idea is absurd. If physical strength were the sole criterion for survival, women would simply have become more muscular (as females are in certain species of birds of prey or insects). One does not become manipulative to avoid being struck; one does so to ensure that the one who possesses the strength uses it according to one's wishes. If humans are one of the few species where the male is physically more powerful (on average), it is because survival has never depended on a raw power struggle between the two. In most societies, both sexes participate in complementary forms of organisation, where cooperation largely takes precedence over direct conflict. The difference in average strength is therefore not sufficient to explain the emergence of complex psychological traits. What is more, since the Industrial Revolution, physical strength has ceased to be the criterion of power. A man weighing 120 kg of muscle has no advantage over a woman weighing 50 kg when faced with a computer terminal, an ATM or a toaster. If manipulation were truly a costly 'biological adaptation' (in the sense that it requires a great deal of mental energy), nature, which is a frugal accountant, would have had to get rid of it as soon as it became unnecessary for establishing female power. We are still waiting for evolutionary psychologists to explain why, even though the internal combustion engine has replaced our arms and the Civil Code has replaced the club, women have not yet 'evolved' into creatures of absolute candour and total transparency. If manipulation was a prosthesis to compensate for physical weakness, why keep the prosthesis when we've invented the industrial exoskeleton? With computing, power has shifted from muscles to code, data and networked influence. In a world where one earns a living by tapping keys, sexual dimorphism serves the same biological purpose as male nipples: it is a vestige that no longer serves any purpose. If manipulation were a 'prosthetic', it would belong in the museum of evolutionary horrors, right next to the chipped flint. The digital world is the realm of manipulation par excellence (marketing, social media, social engineering). Of course, evolutionists would reply that it would take millions of years for the adaptation to become apparent. One of the major problems with evolutionary psychology is precisely that it explains the emergence of psychological traits as the result of selective pressures spread over hundreds of thousands, or even millions, of years, which makes its hypotheses impossible to verify.

For Aristotle, human nature falls within an essentialist ontology: every being possesses a stable and immutable essence oriented towards its own end, and behaviours are explained by the gradual realisation of this essence. With Darwin, this view is overturned: nature is no longer an essence, but a historical process, where biological traits result from random variations and natural selection.

Evolutionary psychology extends this reversal by applying Darwinism to the mental sphere: cognitive mechanisms are interpreted as the result of a cumulative process in which, over thousands of generations, cognitive variants that provided even a minimal advantage for survival and reproduction were preserved by natural selection.

If we consider the long term, certain elements tend to confirm the Aristotelian intuition of a relatively stable human nature. Despite the major upheavals represented by the Palaeolithic revolution (the emergence of agriculture and animal husbandry), the Industrial Revolution (urbanisation, mechanised labour, artificial rhythms) and the Digital Revolution (dematerialisation, the instantaneous nature of everything, the blending of the real and the virtual), fundamental psychological needs, such as parental attachment, intra-group cooperation, the need for recognition, and basic emotions, remain remarkably constant.

That said, evolutionary masculinist writings, including *All About Women: What Big Sister Doesn't Want You to Know. An Introduction to Procedural Analysis With an Anthology of Other Writing (1998; 2nd ed.: 2015), can, in essence, be more or less 'Aristotelianised'. To do so, one need only replace 'evolve' with 'actualise a disposition' and 'become' with 'be in potency, then in act'.

From an evolutionary perspective, a being does not 'be' in the teleological sense that Aristotle gives to the term, but neither is it a pure indeterminacy. Evolutionary psychology assumes the existence of inherited predispositions (cognitive biases, behavioural tendencies and emotional structures) that guide behaviour without determining it absolutely. Psychological traits are not viewed as mere qualities, but as dispositions that, at a given time, favoured survival or reproduction. Thus, what appears to be a spontaneous inclination — for example, empathy, emotionality or irrationality—is interpreted as a mechanism that served a specific function, such as, respectively, caring for children and maintaining social bonds, detecting threats (anxiety or fear are alarms that prepare the body for flight or fight long before the intellect has analysed the threat) and seeking help, rapid adaptation to situations perceived as uncertain (in a forest, it is better to make a hasty retreat unnecessarily after mistaking a branch for a predator than to carry on and realise too late that it is indeed a predator. The cost of a false positive is low, whereas that of a false negative can be fatal) and deterrence. In this context, behaviour need not be consciously calculated to be described as 'functional': it may be experienced as natural whilst producing adaptive effects. However, this line of reasoning is not without contradiction. Indeed, once these dispositions are described in terms of their 'advantage' or 'effectiveness', they tend to be reframed as forms of strategy. The vocabulary itself suggests an intention, a goal-oriented focus, which contradicts the initial idea of spontaneous, unreflective behaviour. We thus move, without sufficient clarification, from a descriptive register to a quasi-intentional interpretation. This results in a fundamental ambiguity: either these behaviours stem from internalised mechanisms, independent of any conscious will, or they imply a form of purposeful, if not calculated, conduct. Maintaining both these interpretations simultaneously—naturalness on the one hand, strategy on the other—amounts to superimposing two incompatible levels of explanation without clarifying how they are linked. For Chinweizu, 'irrationality' in women is a tactic, that is to say, a tool of domination, an instrument of negotiation, a means of maximising power. For an evolutionary psychologist, female irrationality is a cognitive adaptation, a bias, a heuristic, that is to say, a mechanism selected by evolution, non-intentional: function does not imply intention. In Simon Sheppard's work, however, there is frequently a shift between functional (non-intentional) explanation and a strategic reading of the effects (quasi-intentional)…

We know nothing about this British activist, born in 1957 in Hull and staunchly opposed to the ongoing colonisation of his native country, except that, since 1999, he has had repeated run-ins with Her Majesty's judges, first in the Netherlands, then in Great Britain, for having, through certain writings, questioned the historical reality of a catastrophe that neither de Gaulle nor Churchill nor Eisenhower mention in the chapters of their memoirs dealing with the Second World War, and subsequently for having, through other writings, repeatedly breached sections 18, 19 and 21 of the Public Order Act (1986), sections 28 to 32 of the Crime and Disorder Act (1998), as well as sections 3 and 26 of the Equality Act (2010) and, more recently, for what appears to have been a verbal indecent assault, for which there is no evidence that he was convicted.

All About Women, as the author states in the preface to the first edition, is not a didactic work. Rather, it is a collection of fragments, fragments that give the impression of having been hastily scribbled on the corner of a table at a café terrace in a huge station during rush hour. It could have been subtitled: ' Everything you always wanted to know about women that no sexologist (especially not a female sexologist) will ever tell you', bearing in mind that the very fact of consulting one—or even considering consulting one, even if under pressure from one's 'other half', constitutes a deal-breaker for reading it in the first place.

It has never been more relevant: quite simply, the word 'women' in the passage on 'The Rules' could be replaced by 'the deranged individuals currently occupying the White House' without any problem.

The greatest part of history has yet to be written; it lies within us. Instincts have evolved just as organs have, to give us an advantage in a competitive, often hostile environment. During the early stages of human history, women were almost constantly pregnant or breastfeeding (which prevents conception). During the Upper Palaeolithic (40,000–10,000 BCE), life expectancy for men was 33.3 years and for women 28.7 years; the main cause of female mortality was childbirth and attempted abortions (for example, jumping with both feet on a plank placed on a woman's stomach until blood gushed from the vagina) .

Male mortality was mainly due to hunting accidents and fights over women. According to Darwin, the tradition of the 'best man' derives from his role as an accomplice in the abduction of a bride from a neighbouring village. Indeed, this practice still survives today in certain regions.

Marvin Harris concluded that around 10,000 BCE, the population suddenly increased in certain cultures, after having remained relatively stable until then, leading to a marked deterioration in health and living conditions.

To gain even a somewhat accurate understanding of human behaviour, and in particular of interactions between men and women, it is necessary to take into account the evolutionary history of humanity—the succession of human species or forms over time and the genetic and morphological transformations that have led to the present-day species. The bulk of our evolutionary conditioning took shape during the two million years of prehistory. It was during this period that our behaviours were formed and that the causes and mechanisms which have made us what we are today originated.

1. Parasites and symbionts

A parasite lives at the expense of its host without providing anything in return, whereas a symbiont coexists with the host and provides it with some benefit. The distinction between parasite and symbiont can, however, be subtle. Parasites are extremely widespread in nature, and it is difficult to accept that such systems are not also found in humans.

In biology, a symbiosis is a long-term interaction between two different species living in close association. It can be beneficial to one or both species. For example, large fish, such as groupers, harbour parasites and fungi on their skin or gills, which cleaner fish feed on. Cleaner fish penetrate as far as their gills, or even into their mouths. The large fish regularly return to the same spot, often coral reefs, to be cleaned. In this exchange, the cleaner cooperates with the large fish by ridding the host of its parasites, and the large fish cooperates with the cleaner fish by not devouring it. Remarkably, very few cleaner fish end up in the stomachs of the larger fish. Repeated interactions are essential to this form of cooperation, as they are to many others.

Ants provide a particularly instructive subject of study, far more so than one might think at first glance, for the analysis of social behaviour. Human intelligence has enabled the relatively rapid establishment of social structures such as governments and armies; but ants, for their part, have perfected these structures almost mechanically, through a long process of evolutionary trial and error that has spanned a far greater period of time.

Richard Dawkins gives examples of the ingenuity that parasites can display and the ease with which they deceive their prey. The ingenuity of the strategies employed by certain species of ants would make the cuckoo look like a novice. For instance, Protomagnathus americanus launch raids on the nests of other ant species. Once the queen of this species has eliminated the queen of the other ant species' nest, she takes over that nest. She begins to lay eggs, but it is the workers of the invaded colony, now deprived of their original queen, who feed and raise them, as if they were their own offspring. Over time, these eggs give rise to new parasitic queens. These then leave the colony to infiltrate other colonies, thereby replicating the same invasion process and ensuring the spread of the parasitic species.

This strategy has been outmanoeuvred by another species of ant. To quote Dawkins in The Selfish Gene, p. 252:

'Chopping off heads is a bit tedious. Parasites are not accustomed to exerting themselves when they can coerce a substitute to act on their behalf. My favourite character in Edward O. Wilson's The Insect Societies is Monomorium santschii.

This species, in the course of its evolution, has entirely lost the worker caste. The host workers therefore do all the work for the parasites, including the most terrible task of all. At the behest of the invading parasitic queen, they kill their own mother. The usurper does not even need to use her mandibles.

How she goes about it remains a mystery; she probably uses a chemical, as the ants' nervous system is generally very sensitive to such substances. If her weapon is indeed chemical, then it is a substance as insidious as any drug known to science. Consider what it achieves: it floods the worker ant's brain with this substance, takes control of its nervous system, alters its most instinctive behaviours, and drives it to turn against its own mother.

In ants, matricide constitutes a particularly extreme form of genetic aberration; it therefore requires an agent of remarkable potency to drive them to it.

Within the framework of the extended phenotype concept, one should not ask how an animal's behaviour benefits its genes, but rather: whose genes does it benefit?

Male-female symbiosis

The three dominant factors underlying interactions between the sexes are probably as follows:

1. Primitive level. At a fundamental level, gender asymmetry is based on a difference in reproductive resources: sperm are produced in large quantities and continuously, whilst the supply of eggs is limited.

This initial asymmetry leads to a divergence in parental investment: male reproduction carries a low biological cost, whereas female reproduction carries a high cost, particularly due to gestation and the care the female provides for her offspring.

Biologically speaking, the female is said to be pregnant, that is, in a state of gestation (from a strictly evolutionary perspective, post-menopausal females no longer play a direct role in reproduction) (1).

2. Physical. Women are physically weaker than men. To compensate for this disadvantage, they have developed numerous mechanisms designed to manipulate men, and in particular their partners. To be fully effective, these mechanisms require that men remain unaware of their existence. (In the long term, an obvious female strategy is to deny men who are impervious to any form of female manipulation the opportunity to reproduce with them)

3. Psychological. During sexual selection, telling a woman something she does not want to hear, regardless of its truth, immediately compromises a man's chances of reproducing. As women are, by nature, more perceptive than men and likely to detect any conscious attempt at deception, men, in order to increase their chances of reproducing, end up deceiving themselves. The most convincing liar is the one who has convinced himself of his own lie (2).

Several psychologists have studied the pick-up lines used by men, and the one that consistently yields the worst results is: 'How about we have sex right now?'. When a man is direct and forthright, he generally fails to seduce. (Men who adopt this type of approach outside an experimental context often do so to try to compensate for excessive neurosis.) If a woman approaches a man, the content of her opening line is actually irrelevant.

In reality, when women have a free choice of partners, they tend to prefer men who display feminine traits. This can be explained by the 'selfish gene theory': the gene seeks above all to reproduce and propagate itself. Hence women's affinity for gay men, as they possess feminine traits. (It is true, however, that when men display feminine traits, they often do so with a typically masculine intensity.)

Adult men often pretend not to be interested in a woman in order to arouse her interest: the challenge for him is then to create a situation where the relationship can develop without him having to explicitly express his desire.

Sometimes, men make no effort to conceal their intentions and occasionally succeed in their aims despite this. The reason is probably that the woman is offered a relationship on terms so favourable to her that she cannot refuse it, as she has, from the outset, control over the dynamics of the relationship.

Furthermore, women tend not to express their intentions clearly, so that their objective may remain vague, whereas the man's is not.

Modern history

A hundred years ago, the inferiority of women was obvious to everyone. Two hundred years ago, scolding caps [literally: scolding caps. Women deemed too talkative or insolent were made to wear this headgear as a punishment]. Entire families slept in the same bed and, with increasing population density, they were likely more infested with parasites and more exposed to disease than in prehistoric times.

Violence against women was regarded as a necessary last resort, as the home was seen as the foundation of society and, if the family broke down, it was believed that society as a whole risked collapse.

Under the legal principle of coverture, a husband was liable for his wife's debts, responsible for her expenses and even liable for her misdemeanours or crimes. This rule was still in force in Oklahoma in 1931.

In 1910, the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) — the most militant suffragette organisation — declared war on the British government.

A few hundred middle-class women, funded by donations from wealthy women in high society, waged a campaign of insurrectionary actions, vandalism and arson. They set fire to churches, damaged works of art and planted bombs.

However, at the start of the First World War, the very same activists who had been leading an insurrection against the state suddenly became among its most fervent supporters. (Groups of women, known as the 'White Feather Brigades', handed out white feathers to any man not in uniform, including boys and soldiers on leave.)

(3) Ten months before the end of the war, perhaps as a reward, the government granted the right to vote to women over the age of 30 (4).

The militant feminist movement had just reached a point where the power it had already acquired enabled it to gain even more.

2. What do women want?

One of the most difficult questions to answer is: "What do women really want?" The traditional answer, that what women say they want and what they actually want are two different things, is relevant.

In a more modern, i.e. strategic, analysis (5), it would seem, however, that women deliberately maintain this confusion in order to conceal their strategies. This makes their manoeuvres difficult to identify and discourages the development of counterstrategies.

Women are like extremely tired and irritable children who refuse to admit they want to go to bed, because they prefer to stay downstairs and "act grown-up".

Women want to be loved and adored; but they also want the freedom to behave in ways that make them detestable, as this is another way of avoiding having sex. Women want all the rights, but none of the obligations. They desperately want to be desired, but that does not necessarily mean they want to have sex; what they are seeking above all is confirmation that the man would be willing to have sex with them.

According to a study conducted by Glenn Wilson involving 700 people who were asked to anonymously complete a questionnaire about their sexual fantasies, the fantasy of at least 13% of women is to be forced to have sex, but a man who were to give one of these women what she truly desires would risk a long prison sentence. Most women dreamt of having a husband or a stable partner, whilst most men dreamt of having several female partners. This confirms the general view that women are monogamous and men polygamous — what the author calls the "game of opposites" between the sexes. Several women who were shown these statistics felt that the proportion of women who fantasise about forced sex was in reality very likely higher than 13%, as many women are unable or unwilling to acknowledge their true desires.

THE RULES

1. The woman always sets the rules

a. The rules may be changed at any time, without notice.

b. No man can know all the rules. All women know them naturally from birth.

c. If the woman suspects that the man knows certain rules, she may immediately change them, in whole or in part.

2. The woman is never wrong

a. If the woman is wrong, it is because there has been a misunderstanding, directly caused by something the man said or did incorrectly.

b. If rule 2a applies, the man must immediately apologise for causing the misunderstanding.

3. The woman may change her mind at any time

a. The man must never change his mind without the woman's explicit consent.

4. The woman has the right to be angry or upset at any time

a. The man must remain calm in all circumstances, unless the woman wishes him to be angry or upset.

b. Under no circumstances must the woman tell the man whether she wants him to be angry or upset.

5. Any attempt by the man to change the rules exposes him to serious physical danger.

3. Women are inferior

Women are more sensitive and have a keener sense of taste and smell. From birth, they possess greater tactile sensitivity. They excel at caring for children, detecting subtle cues in others' behaviour, perceiving the emotions implicit in a social situation, and performing tasks that require precision and meticulousness. These are markers of rationality and civilisation.

1. Man's natural domain is that of things

Men can be stimulated and fascinated, even obsessed, by objects or things. In certain populations, men have developed the ability to sublimate their sexual drives into physical and technical drives. The result has been the discovery or invention of all the elements of modernity: electricity, computers, engines, cars, modern science and medicine, washing machines and the contraceptive pill, to name but a few (6).

Men have a superior ability to deal with abstract concepts and objects. As men are superior at organising things, women imitate men.

2. A woman's natural domain is that of relationships. Relationships constitute her primary sexual activity. Women are superior at understanding and managing them.

In this domain, a woman is akin to an expert and naturally gifted chess player facing a beginner. The expert player lets the beginner—the man—make his moves, allowing him to win from time to time to keep him interested, but as soon as she really wants to, she wins. By observing his clumsy attempts, she learns his strategies even before he has mastered them himself.

Women have become manipulative to compensate for men's greater physical strength and aggression. The reason women abhor violence so much is that it is a battlefield on which they always lose. As women are skilled at manipulating relationships, men imitate women.

Ultimately, the only end product of relationships between men and women is children, of whom there are already plenty!

3. Women are beings who, entirely driven by sexuality, are practically willing to do anything to avoid physical sexual intercourse.

Women are hypocritical. The probable origin of this behaviour is that women are empathetic. They are sensitive to the needs of others (particularly men's sexual needs) and are aware of them, but, as a strategy, they refuse them most of the time.

Women are ambivalent and, consequently, neurotic. They desire (at least sometimes) sexual intercourse and this makes them feel more feminine, but their fundamental strategy is to increase the 'cost' of sex, which involves avoiding physical sexual intercourse, as scarcity increases its value. Through various signals and other means, women seek to transfer their neurosis onto men (7).

Women discourage men from adopting behaviours that they themselves adopt; for example, they dissuade them from showing solidarity with one another, whilst supporting one another. This is a form of 'malicious encouragement', which, however, stems from women's interest in encouraging competition between men whilst they conspire against them.

4. Women are selfish. From an evolutionary perspective, this trait stems from the fact that they think not only of themselves, but also of their children, who depend on them. A woman may appear to act out of altruism, but the reality, in almost every case, is that she is merely satisfying her own instincts. Men, on the other hand, will sacrifice themselves for a nobler cause, for example in war. Women are more subtle, take fewer risks and are less inclined to embark on adventures.

5. Women enforce conformity. Women vary less than men. Exceptionally gifted individuals are almost always men.

As women have, for generations, selected men with feminine traits, it is not surprising that many men today display feminine traits (for example, monogamy) (8). Some exceptional men even display feminine traits more distinctly than women themselves. This is why, although women generally cook better, the best chefs are men.

Women have a deep-seated desire for security and moderation, which stems from their role as childbearers. The practice of belittling anyone who stands out from the group is known in Holland as De Wet van Jantje ("the law of little Jan"), in Denmark as Janteloven, and in Sweden as Jantelagen. If the feminine influence is not counterbalanced, the result is a degenerative cycle marked by blandness, mediocrity and cultural stagnation.

7. Women are immature. From an evolutionary perspective, this is because immaturity allows them to interact more effectively with children and thus be better mothers. Conversely, men's maturity stems from the fact that they compete with one another (8).

8. Women are illogical. They throw men off the scent; that is to say, to prevent men from identifying their strategies—and in particular to avoid physical sexual relations—they deliberately make themselves elusive. Hence their irrationality (9) and dishonesty.

A perception does not need to be accurate to be useful for survival. What matters is that it increases the chances of survival and reproduction. Imagine a mutant rabbit, endowed with a scientific mind, who hears a rustling in the grass. Instead of fleeing immediately, he decides to check the source of the noise: wind or predator? He therefore stays put to gather data. But, before he can conclude his experiment, he ends up in the fox's stomach. From an evolutionary perspective, this example illustrates a simple principle: from an evolutionary perspective, the cost of a mistake varies depending on its nature. Mistaking a gust of wind for a fox results only in a pointless flight; mistaking a fox for a gust of wind can be fatal. In the same way, women believe what they want to believe.

8. Women are unable to separate feelings from logic. The corpus callosum, which connects the two hemispheres of the brain, is wider in women than in men. As women's instincts are more reliable, they have had less need to suppress them. Women's favourite pastime is to gauge, reflect on and discuss their feelings. By instinct, they are inclined towards introspection and emotional communication and are more likely to assess situations rather than intervene in them. Conversely, men must strictly control their instinct to act, or risk being swiftly sidelined: either killed by other members of the tribe or imprisoned.

9. Women are prone to irrational fears. They crave stories and information that reinforce these fears. Women project (10) more than men.

10. Women conspire. They instinctively act in concert to increase the cost of sexual relations and thus promote monogamy.

Many female strategies are based on 'compound interest', meaning they yield multiple benefits. The following example illustrates a subtle application of the Conspiracy strategy.

A man makes a friendly and seemingly innocuous comment to a woman, which she interprets as an attempt to make a move. Not only does this interpretation benefit her personally, by giving her the feeling of being desired (which boosts her self-esteem), but it also benefits women in general. She has, in fact, probably made it clear to the man, in one way or another, that she interpreted his friendly comment as an attempt to make a move. The man, learning that a simple gesture of politeness risks being interpreted as an attempt to make a move in every instance, ends up limiting his friendly comments to women he genuinely desires, which weakens his position.

Thus, he can no longer afford the slightest ambiguity in his relationships with women. From the female perspective, the woman is the only one entitled to conceal her intentions.

11. Women know no bounds. They do not exercise self-control and rely on others to guide them. They make unreasonable demands in order to test and extend their power (11). They do not seek to curb the excessive behaviour of other women, but take advantage of any benefit such excesses bring them (another expression of the Conspiracy strategy). To the question 'What will women do?', the answer is: 'Whatever they can get away with without consequences for themselves.' Women are never satisfied.

12. Women lack self-confidence. When it comes to choosing a partner, they quickly switch allegiances to turn to any man willing to devote the most energy to flattering their fragile egos. To use an old term, they dither. Women are malleable: they adopt the customs and values imposed on them by authority figures (12).

13. Women have no sense of humour.

If they do use it, it is to mock those they wish to exclude from their 'inner circle' (OCC, Our Cosy Circle). They discourage any genuine humour because men use it to reduce their psychological tension, and it is in women's interests to keep men in a state of maximum psychological tension. By prohibiting jokes on certain topics, it is possible to turn them into taboos. It then becomes possible to alter perceptions of a subject in order to promote an objective that would be rejected if expressed openly.

These communication techniques serve to defuse natural male reactions such as anger or surprise. When a woman says "no" to a trivial request in a joking tone, it is in reality merely a ploy to prepare the other person for a firm refusal.

14. Women are relentless. Their grievances are too useful to them as weapons for them to abandon or forget them.

15. Women systematically take everything personally. They also display superficiality, which is the logical corollary of their ambivalent behaviour.

16. Women create problems so they can then blame men for them. The very illustration of this strategy is overpopulation. The human population has increased approximately fifty-fold in just five centuries, and overpopulation is the root cause of most contemporary problems.

A woman who says she does not want children is lying, for every woman alive today is the product of an unbroken line of women who have wanted (or at least had) children for millions of years. Those who truly did not want them did not pass on their genes, and their lineages died out. Similarly, it is impossible to have a eunuch as a father. Men, for the most part, would be content with sexual relations.

Simon Sheppard, All About Women: What Big Sister Doesn't Want You to Know. An Introduction to Procedural Analysis With an Anthology of Other Writings, 2nd ed., 1998, excerpts translated by B. K.

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